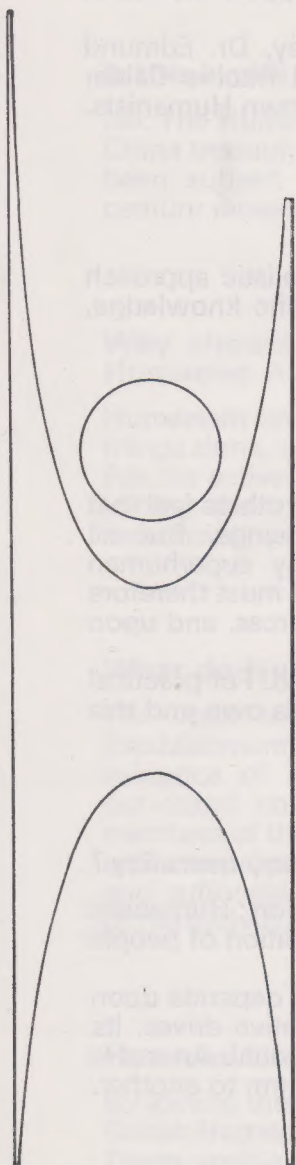


# HUMANISM

## AND THE

# HUMANISTS



## BRIEF ANSWERS TO SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

PUBLISHED BY THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

## **Who are the Humanists ?**

Usually, members of Humanist movements throughout the world ; in this country, members of the British Humanist Association, the Student Humanist Federation and local Humanist groups in various parts of the United Kingdom.

In a broader sense, all those who embrace and support the views and values of humanism.

Prof. A. J. Ayer, Brigid Brophy, Sir Julian Huxley, Dr. Edmund Leach, Joan Littlewood, Vanessa Redgrave, Lord Ritchie Calder and Earl Russell are just a few of the many well-known Humanists.

## **What do they believe ?**

That human welfare and progress depend on a realistic approach to life. An approach guided by reason and scientific knowledge, and motivated by a real concern for humanity.

## **What is their attitude to religion ?**

Some Humanists reject the idea of God completely ; others feel that we cannot be so certain about supernatural beings. But all Humanists agree that we cannot depend on any superhuman guide to tell us how we should live ; the individual must therefore depend upon his own intellectual and moral resources, and upon the help of other people.

The Humanist's concern is with this life in this world. For practical purposes, the assumption is made that man is on his own and this life is all.

## **Without a religion, how can Humanists have any morality ?**

The question assumes that morality depends on religion ; Humanists reject this view. Morality is both a result and a condition of people living in society.

Humanist morality serves only human interests and depends upon curbing aggressive drives and developing co-operative drives. Its aim is the happiness and well-being of every individual. An act is not wrong, Humanists believe, when it brings no harm to another.

## **What do Humanists want ?**

An open society in which differences of opinion are allowed and recognised ; in which individuals are free to develop their own talents and personality provided they do not hurt other people ; a society in which people are not penalised for being different. Humanists believe that private morality should not be subject to public legislation.



Humanists are not aiming at the outlawing or destruction of religious or other groups which disagree with them. They value differences of outlook, and would defend anyone's right to have his own opinions, just as they fight any attempt by one group to impose its opinions on others.

### **Is this a new outlook on life ?**

No. The Humanist tradition may be traced from ancient Greece and China throughout history to the present day, though it has always been subject to revision and development. The mid-twentieth century movement is the present-day expression of this tradition.

### **Why should there be organisations such as the British Humanist Association ?**

Humanism isn't an armchair philosophy ; it's a call to action. To get things done, organisation, concerted action, funds, are essential. For the active Humanist, joining the BHA isn't a simple choice like joining the local chess club ; it springs from an acceptance of responsibility.

### **What do Humanists do ?**

The open society has its enemies ; the BHA is its champion. Establishment values and local and national legislation display evidence of injustice and petty restrictions, and a reliance on out-dated notions. By local, national and international means, members of the BHA give help to those who are in most need now, and campaign against irrational forces which seek to undermine and suffocate the freedom, dignity, independence and happiness of the individual.

### **How can I help ?**

By joining those willing to stand up and be counted—by joining the British Humanist Association.

Those unable to give practical assistance in our campaigns are still as highly valued. Subscriptions are the BHA's life-blood ; every addition to our number adds force to the Humanist movement.

### **What should I do ?**

Fill in the form overleaf and post it immediately.

**TUCK IN THIS SECTION**

Please send me further details about humanism and the British Humanist Association\*

I wish to become a member of the British Humanist Association. Please send me an Application Form\*

**BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE**

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss\*) .....

Full address .....

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